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Analysis, Modeling and Neural Network Traction Control of an Electric Vehicle without Differential Gears

A. Haddoun, M.E.H. Benbouzid, *Senior Member, IEEE*, D. Diallo, *Senior Member, IEEE*, R. Abdessemed, J. Ghouili and K. Srairi

Abstract—This paper presents system analysis, modeling and simulation of an EV with two independent rear wheel drives. The traction control system is designed to guarantee the EV dynamics and stability in case of no differential gears. Using two electric in-wheel motors give the possibility to have a torque and speed control in each wheel. This control level improves the EV stability and the safety. The proposed traction control system uses the vehicle speed, which is different from wheels speed characterized by slip in the driving mode, as input. In this case, a generalized neural network algorithm is proposed to estimate the vehicle speed. In terms of the analysis and the simulations carried out, the conclusion can be drawn that the proposed system is feasible. Simulation results on a test vehicle propelled by two 37-kW induction motors showed that the proposed control approach operates satisfactorily.

Index Terms—Electric vehicle, electric motor, speed estimation, neural networks, traction control.

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, Electric Vehicles (EVs) including fuel-cell and hybrid vehicles have been developed very rapidly as a solution of energy and environmental problems. From the point of view of control engineering, EVs have much attractive potential. Since electric motors and inverters are utilized in drive system, they have great advantages over internal combustion engine vehicles such as quick torque response and individual control of each wheel. Although several control methods have been proposed using these merits, their controllers depend on some immeasurable parameters such as vehicle velocity, slip angle, etc.

The principal constraints in vehicle design for personal mobility are the development of a nonpolluting high safety and comfortable vehicle. Taking into account these constraints, our interest has been focused on the 2×4 electrical vehicles, with independent driving in-wheel motor at the front and with classical motors on the rear drive shaft.

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Torque control can be ensured by the inverter, so this vehicle does not require differential gears. However, one of the main issues in the design of this vehicle (without mechanical differential) is to assume the car stability. During normal driving condition, all the drive wheel system requires a symmetrical distribution of torque in both sides. This symmetrical distribution is not sufficient when the adherence coefficient of tires is changing: the wheels have different speeds; so the needs for traction control system [1]. This is still an open problem as illustrated by a limited available literature [2-3].

To address this open problem, this paper proposes a neural network traction control approach of an electrical differential system for an EV propelled by two induction motor drives (one for each wheel). In recent years, neural network concepts have become an active research area. Because of the necessity for adaptive abilities in a network learning process, applying neural networks to system identification and control dynamics has become a promising alternative to process control [4]. Neural networks can be applied to control and identify the nonlinear systems since they approximate any desired degree of accuracy with a wide range of nonlinear model.

The rotor speed information of an induction motor in the vector control method is obtained using speed sensors. These sensors are usually expensive and bulky; therefore, the cost and size of the drive systems are increased. Since 1980s the concept of rotor speed estimation has been studied extensively where the instantaneous stator voltages and currents were used to estimate the speed of an induction motor such as in model reference adaptive system, extended Kalman filter algorithm [5]. However, induction motors have highly nonlinear dynamic behaviors and their parameters vary with time and operating conditions. Therefore, it is difficult to obtain accurate speed estimates with these methods. In this paper, a new speed estimation method of an induction motor is proposed where a Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) with two hidden layers is used [5-6]. This neural network was initially proposed by Jordan and then modified by Elman. It is also known as Jordan–Elman neural network in the literature. The multilayer and recurrent structure of ENN makes it robust under parameter variations and system noises. This ENN speed estimator can be used in induction motors vector control to eliminate expensive speed transducers [6].

Moreover, the proposed RNN-based speed estimator, which replaces the speed sensor in vector control approach scheme takes into account the vehicle aerodynamics, and is not applied to the sole induction motors. It should be noted

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The RNN model based in speed estimator replaces the adaptive current model. In this case, each output neuron uses the linear activation function. The solution of the voltage model generates the desired flux components. These signals are compared with the RNN output signals and the weights are trained on-line so that the error $\xi(k+1)$ tends to zero. It is assumed that the training speed is fast enough so that the estimated speed and actual speed can track well [11]. The current model equations can be discretized and written as

$$\begin{bmatrix} \lambda_{dr}^s(k+1) \\ \lambda_{qr}^s(k+1) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 - \frac{T_s}{T_r} & -\omega_r T_s \\ \omega_r T_s & 1 - \frac{T_s}{T_r} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \lambda_{dr}^s(k) \\ \lambda_{qr}^s(k) \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} \frac{L_m T_s}{T_r} & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{L_m T_s}{T_r} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} i_{ds}^s(k) \\ i_{qs}^s(k) \end{bmatrix} \quad (7)$$

Where T_s is the sampling time, L_m the magnetizing inductance, and T_r the rotor time constant. The above equation can also be written in the form

$$\begin{bmatrix} \lambda_{dr}^s(k+1) \\ \lambda_{qr}^s(k+1) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} W_{11} & W_{21} \\ W_{12} & W_{22} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \lambda_{dr}^s(k) \\ \lambda_{qr}^s(k) \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} W_{31} & 0 \\ 0 & W_{32} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} i_{ds}^s(k) \\ i_{qs}^s(k) \end{bmatrix} \quad (8)$$

Where $W_{11} = 1 - T_s / T_r$, $W_{21} = -\omega_r T_s$, $W_{12} = \omega_r T_s$, $W_{22} = 1 - T_s / T_r$, and $W_{31} = L_m T_s / T_r$.

The internal structure of the designed RNN speed estimator is shown in Fig. 2, where black circles represent context nodes and white circles represent the input, hidden and output nodes [11]. The RNN with a linear transfer function of unity gain satisfies equation (11). Note that out of the six weights in the network, only W_{21} and W_{12} (circled in the figure) contain the speed term; therefore, for speed estimation, it is sufficient if these weights are considered trainable, keeping the other weights constant (assuming that T_r and L_m are constants) for speed estimation. However, if all the weights are considered trainable, the speed as well as the rotor time constant can be tuned.

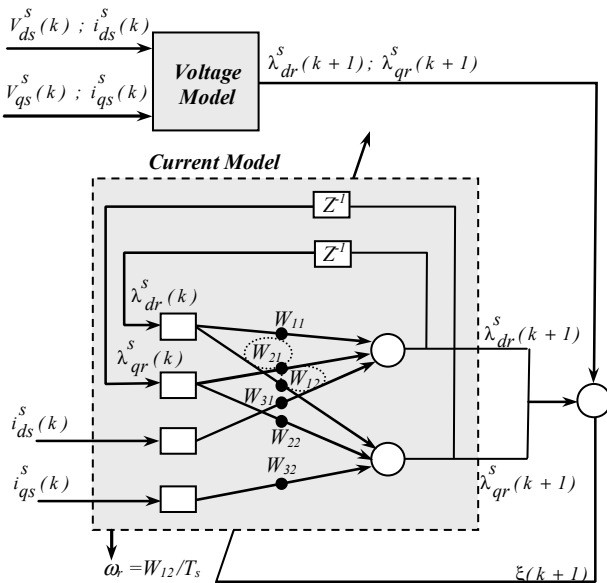


Fig. 2. Internal structure of the RNN estimator.

V. THE ELECTRIC DIFFERENTIAL AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Figure 3 illustrates the implemented system (electric and mechanical components) in the Matlab-Simulink® environment.

The proposed control system principle could be summarized as follows: (1) A speed network control is used to control each motor torque; (2) The speed of each rear wheel is controlled using speeds difference feedback. Since the two rear wheels are directly driven by two separate motors, the speed of the outer wheel will require being higher than the speed of the inner wheel during steering maneuvers (and vice-versa). This condition can be easily met if the speed estimator is used to sense the angular speed of the steering wheel. The common reference speed ω_{ref} is then set by the accelerator pedal command. The actual reference speed for the left drive $\omega_{ref-left}$ and the right drive $\omega_{ref-right}$ are then obtained by adjusting the common reference speed ω_{ref} using the output signal from the RNN speed estimator. If the vehicle is turning right, the left wheel speed is increased and the right wheel speed remains equal to the common reference speed ω_{ref} . If the vehicle is turning left the right wheel speed is increased and the left wheel speed remains equal to the common reference speed ω_{ref} [12-13].

Usually, a driving trajectory is quite enough for an analysis of the vehicle system model. We have therefore adopted the Ackermann-Jeantaud steering model as it is widely used as driving trajectory. In fact, Ackermann steering geometry is a geometric arrangement of linkages in the steering of a car or other vehicle designed to solve the problem of wheels on the inside and outside of a turn needing to trace out circles of different radii. Modern cars do not use pure Ackermann-Jeantaud steering, partly because it ignores important dynamic and compliant effects, but the principle is sound for low speed maneuvers [14]. It is illustrated in Fig. 4.

From this model, the following characteristic can be calculated.

$$R = \frac{L}{\tan \delta} \quad (9)$$

Where δ is the steering angle. Therefore, each wheel drive linear speed is given by

$$\begin{cases} V_1 = \omega_r (R - d / 2) \\ V_2 = \omega_r (R + d / 2) \end{cases} \quad (10)$$

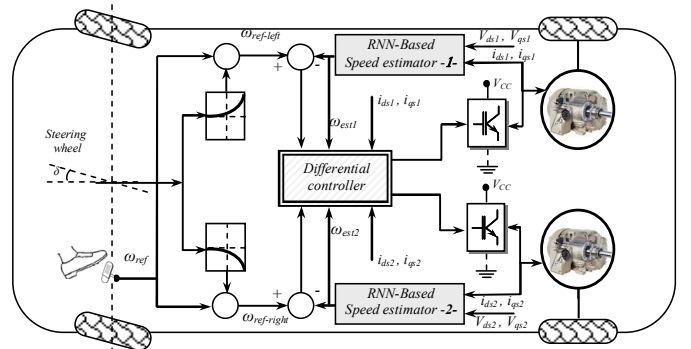


Fig. 3. EV propulsion and control systems schematic diagram.

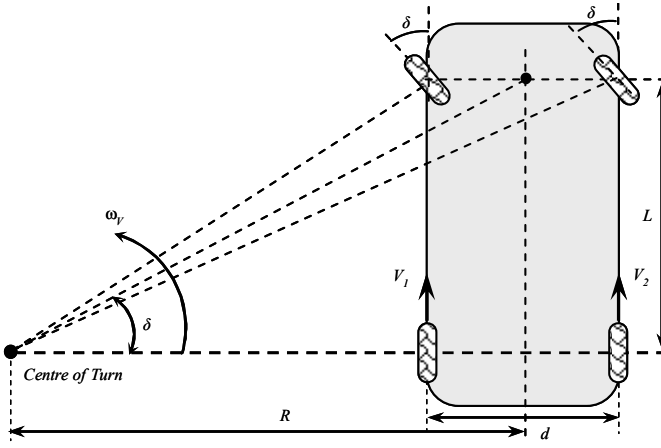


Fig. 4. Driving trajectory model.

and their angular speed by

$$\begin{cases} \omega_{est1} = \frac{L - (d/2) \tan \delta}{L} \omega_v \\ \omega_{est2} = \frac{L + (d/2) \tan \delta}{L} \omega_v \end{cases} \quad (11)$$

The difference between wheel drive angular speeds is then

$$\Delta\omega = \omega_{est1} - \omega_{est2} = -\frac{d \tan \delta}{L} \omega_v \quad (12)$$

and the steering angle indicates the trajectory direction.

$$\begin{cases} \delta > 0 \Rightarrow \text{Turn left} \\ \delta = 0 \Rightarrow \text{Straight ahead} \\ \delta < 0 \Rightarrow \text{Turn right} \end{cases} \quad (13)$$

In accordance with the above described equation, Fig. 5 show the electric differential system block diagram as used for simulations.

VI. SIMULATION RESULTS

Numerical simulations have been carried out on an EV propelled by two 37-kW induction motor drives which ratings are summarized in the appendix. In the appendix are also given the electrical vehicle mechanical and aerodynamic characteristics. The objectives of the carried out simulations are to assess the efficiency and dynamic performances of the proposed neural network control strategy.

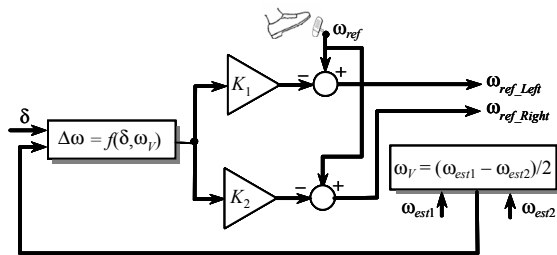


Fig. 5. Block diagram of the electric differential system.

The test cycle is the urban ECE-15 cycle (Fig. 6) [15]. A driving cycle is a series of data points representing the vehicle speed versus time. This driving cycle represents urban driving. It is characterized by low vehicle speed (maximum 50 km/h) and is useful for testing small electrical vehicles performance.

The electric differential performance are first illustrated by Fig. 7 that shows each wheel drive speeds during steering for $0 < t < 1180$ sec. It is obvious that the electric differential operates satisfactorily.

Figures 8 and 9 illustrate the EV dynamics, respectively, the flux (λ_{dr}) in each induction motor and the developed torque on the left and right wheel drives, with changes in the acceleration pedal position (Fig 10) and a varied road profile (rising and downward portions). It should be noticed that flux and torque variations are as large as are the variations of the accelerator pedal and the road profile.

The RNN speed estimator performances are illustrated by Fig.11 that shows the measured speed and the estimated one.

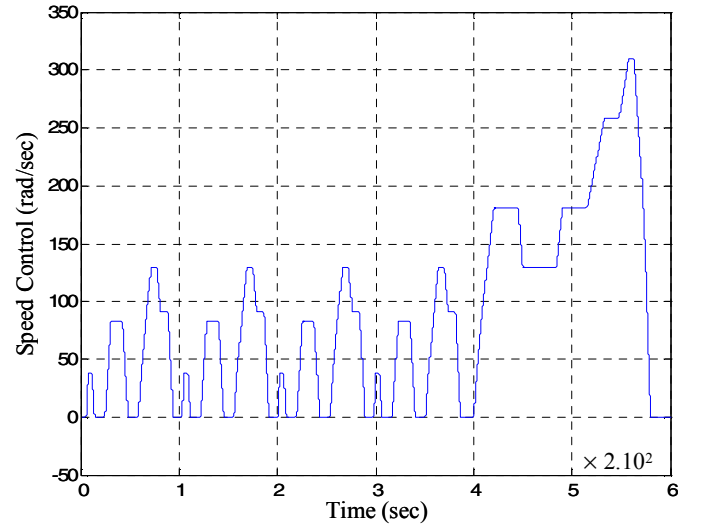


Fig. 6. European urban driving schedule ECE-15.

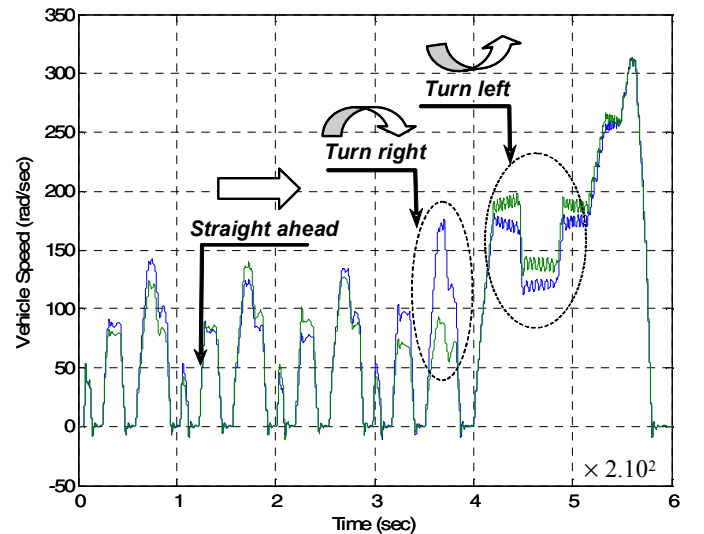


Fig. 7. Vehicle wheels speed.

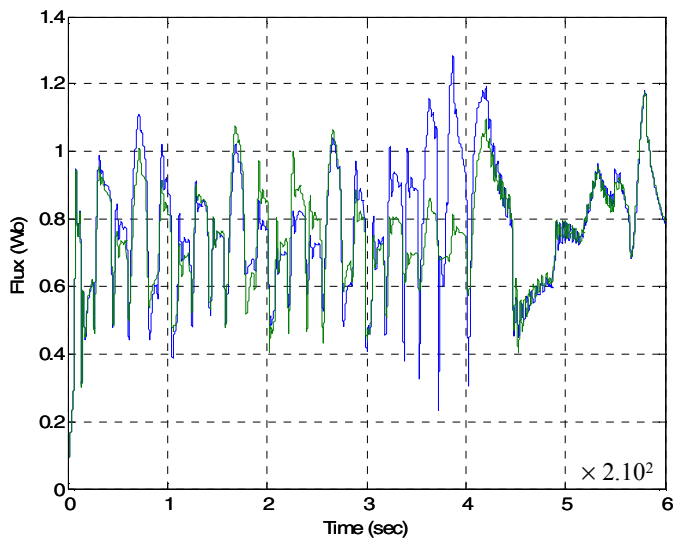


Fig. 8. Flux λ_{dr} .

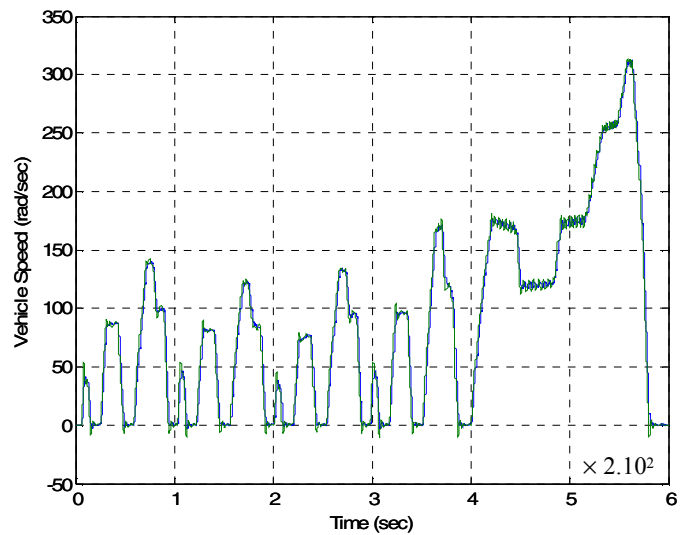


Fig. 11. Estimated and measured vehicle speed.

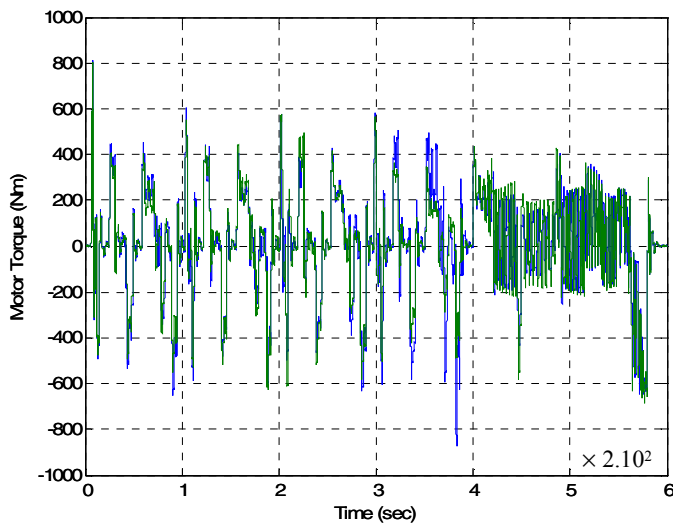


Fig. 9. Motor torque.

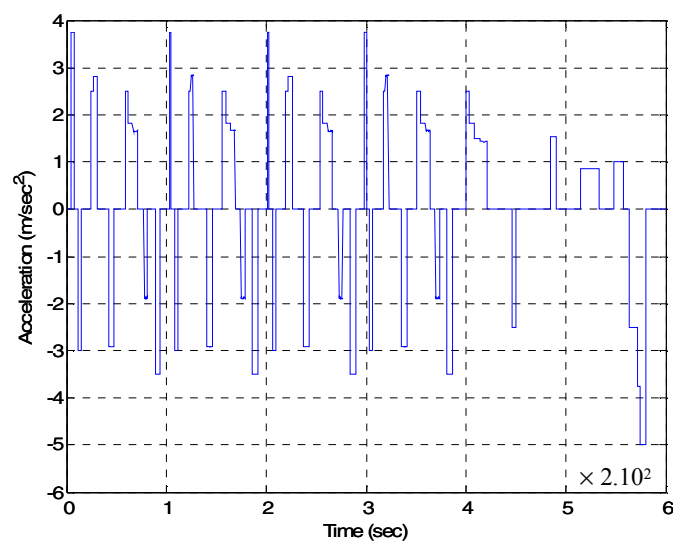


Fig. 10. Acceleration pedal position.

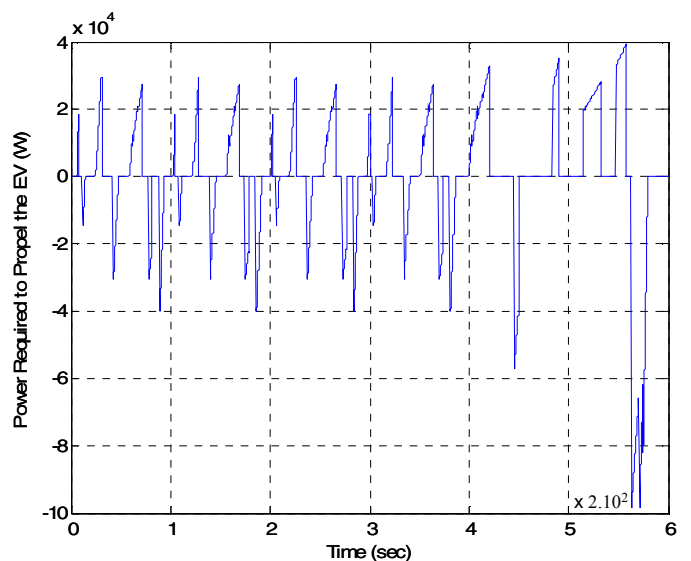


Fig. 12. Power required to propel the EV.

Figure 12 illustrates the power required to move the EV. To find the power taken from the battery to provide the tractive effort, we have to be able to find various efficiencies at all operating points.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, a neural network traction control algorithm for an electrical vehicle with two separate wheel drives has been proposed. This algorithm is necessary to improve the EV steerability and stability during trajectory changes. An electrical differential was implemented and take account of the speed difference between the two wheels when cornering. Moreover, as traction control systems impose a very precise knowledge of the vehicle dynamics, a vehicle dynamics model was exhaustively detailed and applied.

Numerical simulations have been carried out, on an EV propelled by two 37-kW induction motor drives. The test cycle was in our case the urban ECE-15 cycle.

During traction and regenerative braking, a correlation of traction control with motor performances has been realized. The obtained results seem to be very promising.

The neural network controller (RNN) speed estimator eliminates the need for an expensive speed transducer with a reasonable accuracy. It is shown that the proposed method estimates the speed accurately over the entire speed range from zero to full speed. Moreover, it has robust speed estimation performance even at step load change or under variable speed operation.

APPENDIX

RATED DATA OF THE SIMULATED INDUCTION MOTOR

37 kW, 50 Hz, 400/230 V, 64/111 A, 24.17 Nm, 2960 rpm
 $R_s = 85.1 \text{ m}\Omega$, $R_r = 65.8 \text{ m}\Omega$
 $L_s = 31.4 \text{ mH}$, $L_r = 29.1 \text{ mH}$, $L_m = 29.1 \text{ mH}$
 $J = 0.23 \text{ kg.m}^2$

EV MECHANICAL AND AERODYNAMIC PARAMETERS

$m = 1540 \text{ kg}$ (two 70 kg passengers), $A = 1.8 \text{ m}^2$, $r = 0.3 \text{ m}$
 $\mu_{rr1} = 0.0055$, $\mu_{rr2} = 0.056$, $C_{ad} = 0.19$, $G = 104$, $\eta_g = 0.95$
 $T = 57.2 \text{ Nm}$ (stall torque), $v_0 = 4.155 \text{ m/sec}$
 $g = 9.81 \text{ m/sec}^2$, $\rho = 0.23 \text{ kg/m}^3$

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